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STATE OF WASHINGTON

# First Message

of

# LOUIS F. HART

Acting Governor

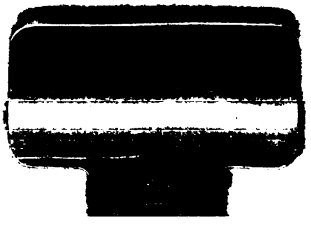
to the

# State Legislature

## Extraordinary Session

## 1920

OLYMPIA
FRANK M. LAMBORN PUBLIC PRINTER
1920



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## EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

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OLYMPIA, March 22, 1920.

*To the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the Legislature of the State of Washington:*

The Constitution of the State vests in the Chief Executive the power to convene the Legislature in extraordinary or Special Session. The same article of the Constitution makes it the duty of the Executive to communicate at every Session by message to the Legislature the condition of the affairs of the State and recommend such measures as he shall deem expedient for their action. The Special Session of the Legislature having been convened you are entitled to know the necessity therefor.

When admitted into the Union in 1889 our State started in a reasonably modest way under a stable representative government, providing only such governmental functions as custom and experience had proven necessary for the peace, happiness and prosperity of the people at a cost of about $4.70 per capita.

Since that time many departments, boards and commissions, adding numerous theretofore unknown governmental functions, have been created by the Legislature, with but one attempt at organization or consolidation under departmental heads, until we find the cost of government has arisen to $20.81 per capita.

Continuing adding governmental functions can but continue to increase governmental expense and higher rate of taxation.

Providing revenues by direct taxes on property has almost reached the dividing line between taxation and confiscation.

What the State most needs is not greater appropriations but the exercise of sensible, rigid economy in all its departments. The plans for reorganizing the boards and commissions under departmental heads are not sufficiently worked out in detail to justify their presentation at this time, nor would the time at your disposal at this Special Session be sufficient for an intelligent consideration thereof. The suggestion is made for the study by the people between now and the next regular session of the Legislature.

From the year 1913 to 1919 the assessed valuation of the property of this State increased from $1,005,086,251 to $1,035,938,644, or an increase of about 3%.

## DEFICIENCY.

It has been the practice of the Board of Equalization for several years to make a very low tax levy for General State purposes in one year and levying the maximum or near maximum rate for the succeeding year to take care of the deficiencies caused by the previous year's low levy.

Following this custom the Board of Equalization in September, 1918, made a tax levy for General State purposes of 1.8 of a mill. This levy was made about six weeks prior to the signing of the Armistice, and the Legislative Session of 1919 immediately following the levying of this tax and the signing of the Armistice, found itself confronted with "after war" conditions that demanded appropriations far in excess of those ever

heretofore made. The result of this low tax levy and increased appropriation was that the estimated revenues for the biennium April 1, 1919, to March 31, 1921, was $1,907,176.89 less than the actual appropriations for the same period and we were confronted on March 8, 1920, with an overdraft in the General Fund amounting to $1,112,649.65.

If the tax levy for General State purposes made in September, 1918, had have been the full three mill levy in anticipation of "after war" expenditures, the revenues for the first half of this biennium would have been $1,243,000 greater than they in fact were and would have more than taken care of the present overdraft in the General Fund. This condition makes it impossible to appropriate money from the General Fund to take care of deficiencies in other than strictly State Fund institutions unless some relief can be had in excess of the three mill tax levy.

## HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

The close of the War and the resumption of civil affairs brought an increased enrollment to the State University and to the State College of nearly 70%, which made it impossible for these institutions to function with the funds available from a tax levy fixed at the 1917 Session, to say nothing of the demands for increased wages and other constantly growing higher expenses.

This condition is relatively true of the State Normal Schools, and the funds available for all of the higher educational institutions will have been exhausted by the

time the Legislature meets in regular session, and unless some relief is granted at this time there will be no funds available or anticipated from which the deficiency appropriations could be met nor that would take care of the deficiency for the coming biennium with a tax levy as fixed in 1917.

In 1911 the Legislature endeavoring to get these institutions on a better business basis provided for what has been generally known as the millage tax and in 1917 this millage tax was revised and at the same time the Board of Higher Curricula of the State was directed in their report next preceding the convening of the Legislature in 1921 to recommend any changes in levy which the State Board may deem necessary or proper and to give their specific grounds and reasons therefor. It is not practicable to readjust this millage tax without such detailed report as contemplated in this direction to the Board of Higher Curricula and without considerable thought and study on the part of the Legislators to determine what is just and necessary.

The temper of the people of our State is not such as to justify the Legislature in considering any matters that will extend the length of the session unreasonably or that can be deferred until the regular session next January.

No appropriation should be made at this session for any purpose.

## CHANGE OF TAX LEVY.

To take care of the deficit caused by a tax levy one and two-tenths mills lower than it should have been for the year 1919, and of the increased cost of maintenance, it is recommended that Section 9212 of Remington's Codes and Statutes of Washington be amended by raising the maximum tax levy for general state purposes and thus allow the Board of Equalization to make a levy to raise the funds to take care of all of these deficiencies.

At the regular session you will be asked to change the date for meeting of the Board of Equalization, as well as changing the beginning of the fiscal year from April 1st to July 1st. Reasons for the proposed change will be presented to the regular session.

It is the province of the Legislative Branch of government to determine governmental policies, and the Board of Equalization should meet immediately after adjournment of the regular session of the Legislature to levy a tax to raise funds to carry on the work laid out by the Legislature.

This change, of course, could not become operative before the year 1922, even if adopted at the next regular session.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The condition of our public schools is almost, if not quite as deplorable as the institutions of higher learning. Hundreds of teachers are quitting the profession for more remunerative employment. Young men and women are being deterred from qualifying for and entering the

profession by reason of the meager wages paid school teachers as compared with men and women engaged in other vocations. A conference was held some weeks ago with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and a plan of campaign mapped out to be executed the latter part of this month and early in April to induce the local boards and electors to provide ways and means to take care of increased expense incident to reasonable wages. It is hoped that the school directors and the electors in the several districts throughout the State wherein it is necessary to increase their revenue in order to pay a living wage to their teachers, will not hesitate to take advantage of the present statute and where necessary make a tax levy of twenty mills or so much as is needed for that purpose. It is confidently believed that if this is done the present unsatisfactory condition may be tided over until the regular session of the Legislature having before it a well digested bill, prepared in advance, may enact such legislation at the regular session as will give permanent relief and will equalize the revenue upon a census basis. A commission to make a thorough survey and report a code to the next session is recommended.

## SOLDIERS' BONUS.

Early in the regular session last year there was adopted, by the almost unanimous vote of the Senators and Members of the House, what was known as Senate Joint Resolution No. 3 by Senator Smith, urging Congress to take certain action for the relief of the returned service men. In all but one thing Congress did the things requested and public sentiment appears to be